



History

King Leopold II: The Man Who Murdered 10 Million Natives in Congo

By Uzonna Anele April 13, 2021

When you kill between five to six million Jews, more than three million Soviet prisoners of war, more than two million Soviet civilians, a million Polish and Yugoslav civilians respectively, around 70,000 men, women and children with mental and physical handicaps and more than 200,000 gipsies, you are Hitler. Your name is immortalised in lists of most evil men in history and whatever symbol associated with your life is criminalised in total abhorrence.



King Leopold II

What if you kill Africans? What if you kill at least 10 million black Africans in the Congo? Is your memory reduced to a taboo or you are branded the Builder King of Belgium? When the history books are consistently penned by beneficiaries of African deaths, villains are eulogised and praised in utter disdain of the millions of black lives lost.

***HIS NAME IS LEOPOLD II, AND SURPRISINGLY MOST AFRICANS
HAVEN'T HEARD OF HIM.***

His name is King Leopold II of Belgium and here are things you should know about him, his atrocities in Congo and why they call him the butcher of Congo.

- King Leopold II was a violent, genocidal maniac in his own right. Leopold II became the king of Belgium in 1865, just as other European nations were expanding their empires in Africa.
- With his connections and diplomatic skills, Leopold managed to convince European rulers to let him secure a chunk of the Congo—an area of land that was 76 times larger than Belgium itself!

Natives forced to pose with their severed handstitle

- He used explorer [Henry Morton Stanley](#) to help him lay claim to the Congo, an area now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo.
- Leopold's primary goal was to exploit the land as much as possible to make as much money as he could.
- Leopold extracted a fortune from the Congo, initially by the collection of ivory.
- Things became much worse for the people of the Congo as the demand for rubber exploded in the global market in the 1890's. The rise in the price of rubber brought about forced labour from the natives to harvest and process rubber.

Natives harvesting rubber

- To terrorise the population into gathering rubber, Leopold's men would take women as hostages until their menfolk brought in a sufficient quantity. Villages that resisted the system or failed to meet a quota were attacked and destroyed by the regions police. Individuals who failed to reach their quotas were killed, tortured, mutilated.

A missionary posing with a native whose hand was severed

- To ensure that the police weren't wasting bullets on hunting wild game in the jungle, they were required to show proof that each bullet they expended resulted in the death of one of the Congolese natives. When the police couldn't account for all the spent bullets, a terrible trade system began, in which they'd be provided with severed hands of villagers.

Mutilated hands of natives

- [William Henry Sheppard](#), a Presbyterian missionary, who witnessed the devastating impact of the rubber terror on the Kuba people of Congo denounced it in his speeches and writings. For this he was Brought to trial for libel, but was later acquitted.

Man staring at his severed hands

- Finally Reports of deaths and abuse led to a major international scandal in the early twentieth century and the Belgian government ultimately forced Leopold to relinquish control of the colony to Belgian civil administration in 1908.
- Leopold's exploitation of the Congo was so inhuman and devastating that the country was depopulated. Measuring the scale of the catastrophe is difficult, but one demographic study estimated that the population was halved, from twenty million to ten million, between 1880 and 1920.

Somehow, this murderous man managed to have a dignified presence in history or at least escape the spotlight altogether. No one talks about him with as much impassioned hatred as that directed at Hitler and Stalin yet they are killed people by the millions.

- Leopold died in 1909. Not surprisingly, people jeered during his funeral procession. He was not well liked.

He used the blood and sweat of the Congolese was used to build most of the massive urban projects, public works and monuments in Brussel during King Leopold II's tenure.. He used great sums of the money from this exploitation for public and private construction projects in Belgium during this period. He donated the private buildings to the state before his death, to preserve them for Belgium.

Although [king leonard II](#) was just as a bad as hitler, he is not as known all over the world the way hitler is – even though they both are guilty of the same crimes- instead he is praised as the builder of Belgium.

As Africans, we would be doing a great disservice to ourselves if we do not educate our children in schools about Africa's true history and what our fore-fathers really suffered in the hands of imperialist.